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John Vause (HOST): For more on China's new president, we're joined now by Robert Lawrence Kuhn, who is in our New York bureau. He is president of the Kuhn Foundation. He is also author of the book, "*How China's Leaders Think.*" Robert, how does Xi Jinping think?



Robert Lawrence Kuhn: Let's look at his background. He has had over two decades of grassroots administration. He started out running a county in one province, and then worked up to vice mayor of Xiamen city, secretary of Fuzhou city, and governor of Fujian province. He was then Party secretary of Zhejiang province, the center of entrepreneurship. He ran Shanghai for a year as Party secretary, before being elevated to the Politburo Standing Committee, the highest body in China.



But we also have to look at his family background. His father, Xi Zhongxun, was one of the founders of China, a leading reformer under Deng Xiaoping, but he suffered under Mao Tse-Tung – in prison for 16 years. And Xi, himself, during the Cultural Revolution, was sent to a mountain village, one of the poorest parts of China. And he suffered in one sense; but in another sense, he got close to the people. So he's had a very strong relationship with the people of China at the grassroots. He also had two years of service in the military, right after college, in his early career. This is especially important because Xi has focused on the military. He's had a stronger military relationship than had either of his two predecessors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, when they began.



So Xi comes in with a really strong position. And he needs it because of China's problems. We could go through a whole list of challenges, including the structure of the economy, as well as the social issues of healthcare, housing, education, pollution, retirement and food safety. All of these things are all bubbling up together, and with a billion cell phones in China, everybody knows it. So Xi Jinping is on the spot.



HOST: You mention the military, and this is what I find really interesting because he's essentially been running the country since November. He's been the head of the military as well. He's really been wooing the military. He's building this



image, almost like a hardline military leader. He has said publicly that he believes the Soviet Union collapsed because the Communist Party lost control of the military. So what does that say about what we can expect over the next couple of years from Xi Jinping as president?

KUHN: This is an important question. The breakup of the Soviet Union has been a theme of study in China; their conclusion is that the Party lost control of the agenda, as well as of the military. But Xi's focus on the military is not something new. He has been a steadfast supporter of China's military in all the geographical areas in which he has worked. So this is just the culmination of his lifetime appreciation for the Chinese military.

Let's be realistic. When new leaders come into office, in any country, they need to tack nationalistic. They need to show appreciation for their country's pride and patriotism and to defend their own sovereignty and dignity. This is very normal. In China, it's particularly important because somebody who is going to be a reformist in the economy, and potentially in certain political areas, will be accused of being soft or being liberal. (In China, the term "liberal" is right wing, whereas in the West, "liberal" is left wing.) One has to take a strong position on sovereignty, on Chinese pride, on protecting China, and so, therefore, Xi's strong support of the military gives him the bona fides to be a reformer.

That said, Xi's view of Chinese sovereignty and Chinese pride is legitimate. So for a time, we will see, and we already are seeing, a tougher position vis-à-vis issues in the South China Sea and some other areas of concern. But long term, Xi Jinping is a sophisticated, knowledgeable guy. When running provinces, Xi worked with diplomats and with many foreign CEOs. My bet is that Xi Jinping will run a tight ship of state.

HOST: Okay Robert, thanks. We appreciate your insights. There is a lot to expect from Xi Jinping. Robert Kuhn, from New York, the author of the book, "*How China's Leaders Think*" – and he has been giving us some very good insights.